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BABBLE OF THE BOULEVARD

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

SOME years ago an English journalist went about gathering the opinions of certain celebrated literary men and women regarding the use or abuse of tobacco. The example set by the Britisher was recently followed by an enterprising Frenchman, the result of whose interviews are perhaps more interesting than those of his predecessor. They may be summed up as follows:

Aurélian Scholl: "For thirty-five years I have smoked fifteen cigars a day, not to mention a pipe or two at bedtime. I have never, during the same period, written less than 600 lines per week. I have seldom been ill, and have a memory like a phonograph."

La Duchesse d'Uzès: "Of course I smoke, am passionately fond of cigarettes, detest anti-tobacco fiends, and firmly advocate the practice of the so-called vice by all the female sex."

Hector Malot: "I have smoked twice in my life; once at thirteen, the punishment was terrible; again at twenty, my stomach has been unsettled ever since."

Henri Rochefort: "Have always looked upon the use of tobacco as the triumph of conceit. Men smoke for effect, not because it is agreeable to them."

Jules Verne: "Tobacco! I know nothing about the article, having smoked only the cigars made by the Government."

Paul Leroy-Beaulieu: "I am no friend of the weed. Its use, however, is a source of enormous revenue to our Republic. The treasury would be a loser of 300,000,000 francs annually through its abolition. For that reason, and for that alone, I favor it."

Alphonse Daudet: "How can one be engaged in literary pursuits without an occasional pipe? It stimulates the activity of the brain, aids composition, and regulates the mental equilibrium generally."

Emile Zola: "Tobacco is like poetry; the good is acceptable, the indifferent abominable, the bad damnable! Now the tobacco made by the Regie is vile. I am in favor of the separation of tobacco from the State."

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While Parisians had scarcely ceased in the presentation of their toys and *etrennes*, which, by the way, are given at New Years and not on Christmas Day in France, a sale of old-fashioned playthings was taking place at the Hôtel Drouot. The objects offered were mostly small tables, chairs and miniature houses, fabricated during the reigns of Louis XIII, XIV and XV. Of especial interest was a saddle made for Louis XVI when a child, which, after some spirited bidding, was knocked down at 560 francs. Other toys, of the period of the Revolution and the Empire, were all of a military description, offering in themselves the best sort of illustration of the spirit of the time.

* * *

For months Guy de Maupassant has notoriously been insane. For as long a period have his friends denied the fact. They stamped the rumors that got afloat as preposterous, absurd, and fabricated by someone who desired to seriously injure the popular young novelist. That they should have so persistently distorted the true state of affairs is only natural; for while there exists the least degree of hope for a madman's recovery, his relatives and acquaintances are sure to cling to it. But several times of late de Maupassant attempted suicide; once with a revolver, once with a razor, and a third time with poison. The revolver being made in France, was, of course, harmless; the razor was not sufficiently sharp to do much damage, and the poison, for some reason or other, had lost its potency. Thus, while the author of "Pierre et Jean" was doomed to suffer disappointment, his friends took heart and made every effort to keep the affair a secret. The reasons ascribed for the writer's sad condition are many. It has been said by some that he has for a long time been addicted to the use of morphine. The assertion may or may not be true; but it is, at all events, practically accepted in the French world of letters. In some cases opium, or its more powerful alkaloid, may cause a lesion of the cerebral membrane. In other cases it has no such effect.

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One night in October, 1889, I was the occupant of a *fautuil* at the Comédie Française. The play billed for the evening was, if I remember aright, Molière's "Précieuses Ridicules." Next to me sat a gentleman whose pointed paragraphs over the signature of "Le Masque de Fer" occasionally amuse, occasionally pain, habitual readers of the *Figaro*. During the *entr'acte* he called my attention to a man in front of us, whose intensely yellow complexion, bristling hair, heavy brown moustache and grotesque appearance singled him out at once from amid the commonplace bourgeoisie audience. Through the entire evening this man sat stiff, erect and seemingly indifferent to his surroundings. He turned neither to the right nor to the left; he found neither attraction nor amusement in the piece, or, if he did, his countenance certainly did not betray the fact. The man was either a sufferer from some serious bodily or mental disease, or else he was wonderfully eccentric. When I learned that the little creature was Guy de Maupassant I preferred to believe the latter. To-day, the evening passed at the Comédie Française returns vividly to my recollection. I see the tawny-skinned man in his black redingote, sitting

gaunt and impassive before my eyes, and I ask myself if the seeds of that dreadful malady, with which so many men of genius have been afflicted, were not already sown in the brain of one of the noblest followers of Flaubert that ever touched pen to paper?

* * *

The Musée de Cluny has made a valuable acquisition to its already attractive collection. It is the cuirasse worn by the Vicomte de Turenne, Grand Marshal of the forces of Louis XIV, when killed at Salsbach in 1675. The hole made by the cannon ball which caused his death is distinctly visible, being about two inches in diameter.

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I desire to make a correction in the last sentence of the preceding paragraph, in the event of anyone feeling disposed to take me up on it. The hole itself is not visible, although it actually exists. Those who would like to have made this observation are too late.

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After Champfleury, Ross and Harrison Weir, any additional attempts to chronicle the origin, history and transition of the cat, or, indeed, to touch upon the subject at all, must give the boldest pause. Yet perhaps the most successful effort toward the completion of feline literature, and one which cannot but prove interesting to Mr. Dana (Charles A.), is embodied in one of the most sumptuous volumes which has ever made its appearance on the tables of Continental book-sellers. The book, entitled "Henriette Ronner, Painter of Cat Life and Cat Characters," is from the pen of Henri Havard and the press of Messieurs Bousso, Valadon & Cie. It is profusely illustrated with photogravures of a number of the artist's best pictures, while the text is either in French, English or Dutch, as you may choose to have it. Henriette Ronner, who stands supremely at the head of modern painters of the feline species, is quite as popular in France as in her native land of dunes and canals. She has pictured tabby for us in a manner that no other painter of animals has presumed to approach. Her technique, treatment and composition denote an artist of rare skill. Fifty years hence she will be even more celebrated than to-day, and her canvases will command a ransom.

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In an out-of-the-way corner of the building occupied by the Portuguese Minister of the Colonies at Lisbon, were recently discovered some pieces of antique tapestry. The subjects represent the coronation and several scenes in the life of Marcus Aurelius. The colors are remarkably well preserved. Unfortunately the pieces have neither date nor signature attached, though it is presumed that they were made during the early part of the eighteenth century.

* * *

Another find, and one over which numismatists seem to be unusually exercised, is a tetradrachm or stater of Philip of Macedon, probably a relic of some invasion of Gaul before the beginning of the Christian era. It was dug up in the back garden of a peasant in the Department of the Charente, France. Monsieur Le Normant, a noted expert, to whom the piece has been presented for inspection, states that he knows the existence of but one other of its kind. It is to be placed in the Museum of Bergerac.

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The attention of philatelists may be directed to a new Colonial stamp just issued by the French government. The design represents the spirit of Navigation and Commerce, floating upon the sea the tricolor of the Republic. The two figures stand erect upon the prow of a merchant ship. Above are the words: "République Française—Colonies—Postes." Below is engraved the value of the stamp and the name of the colony for whose use it may be issued.

PARIS, January 20, 1892.

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

PHILATELIC POINTERS

A POSTAGE stamp of the original value of about sixteen cents was sold by auction in London recently for \$240. It was a Moldavian eighty-one paras postage stamp. Three years ago a copy of the same stamp realized at auction only \$50.

Mr. C. F. Rothfuchs, the stamp dealer of Washington D. C., estimates that there are some 500 stamp collectors in that city. A local branch of the American Philatelic Association is being talked of.

The annual banquet of the Chicago Philatelic society was held last month at the Grand Pacific. Twenty members sat down to a nine-course dinner. These officers were installed: P. M. Wolseffer, president; W. Janssen, vice-president; C. E. Severn, secretary; A. S. Pierce, treasurer. These four officers, with S. Leland, W. C. Kurzweg, and A. P. Hosmer, are the governing board of the society. There were present from abroad John K. Tiffany and J. A. Makeel, of St. Louis, and J. W. Bourne of St. Paul. Others present were: J. W. Carrington, Phillip H. Dilg, A. L. Holman, L. W. Drury, and C. McDonald.

Edwards, Peeke & Co. of 2728 Calumet avenue, Chicago, have been in the stamp business since 1868 and do a very large mail trade. They are among